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# Behavior Management Training Issues in Kentucky Classrooms

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BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING ISSUES  
IN KENTUCKY CLASSROOMS

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Psychology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Specialist in Education

by  
Karin Lynn Holland

August 1998



BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING ISSUES  
IN KENTUCKY CLASSROOMS

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# BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING ISSUES IN KENTUCKY CLASSROOMS

Karin Lynn Holland                      August 1998    49 Pages

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Classroom discipline is often a primary concern of teachers. Little is known, however, about the extent of teachers' knowledge, training, and skills with behavior management issues. This study was conducted to examine teachers' training with specific behavioral strategies, their personal level of proficiency in resolving these problems, and to determine if teachers consider the function of aberrant behaviors when deciding upon treatment interventions. A survey was developed to address these issues. The survey was distributed to teachers in four south-central Kentucky counties and two western Kentucky counties. Of the 350 surveys distributed, 209 were returned for a 59.7% return rate. There were 177 regular education teachers and 32 special education teachers included in the sample. Results of this study indicated a relatively high percentage of students exhibited problematic behaviors to the point that an intervention was necessary to resolve the problem. The highest percentage of teachers received training in behavior management strategies through a workshop/in-service. The majority of teachers reported they received training in a variety of behavioral methods, with the training perceived as only moderately helpful. When asked to rate their skills in resolving specific behavior problems, teachers reported their skills to be at a moderate level. The majority of special education teachers had heard of the term functional assessment although less than half received any training in this procedure. Most of the

regular education teachers indicated no knowledge of functional assessment. Most teachers did not consider the function of the problematic behaviors when deciding upon treatment interventions. The results revealed a strong need for improved training in classroom management strategies. Future research is needed to determine more effective strategies to train teachers in classroom management.

## Introduction

School psychologists are often called upon to intervene and assist with a variety of behavioral concerns. Many schools also have prereferral teams, which may consist of several teachers, the guidance counselor, and the school psychologist. These teams recommend behavioral interventions, prior to a special education referral, in an attempt to prevent special education placement. Unfortunately, a high proportion of prereferral interventions has been found to be ineffective, which could be due in part to treatment selection (Vollmer & Northup, 1996). Flugum and Reschly (1996) also note that prereferral interventions have not reduced special education placements.

Often a treatment is selected for a behavioral concern using a "cookbook" approach (i.e., for behavior problem A, use intervention Z). A number of manuals promoting such an approach have specifically targeted behavioral problems in educational settings (Cummins, 1988; Essa, 1990; McCarney & Cummins, 1988; Sprick, Sprick, & Garrison, 1993). For example, Essa (1990) recommends that if a child is throwing tantrums, then the teacher or caregiver should ignore tantrums when they occur, reinforce appropriate behaviors, and help the child deal with emotional reactions in acceptable ways. Sometimes the intervention will be successful and sometimes it will not be successful. If the intervention does not work, the lack of success will likely be attributed to the consultee (e.g., the teacher or parent did not implement the procedure correctly or consistently).

In 1982, however, Iwata, Dorsey, Slifer, Bauman and Richman published an article on the functional analysis of behavior that helped explain the inconsistencies in treatment effectiveness. They were able to demonstrate that aberrant behavior served different functions. Four functions were identified: attention seeking, escape from demands, access to tangible items, and sensory stimulation. Thus a child may engage in tantrums to gain attention or may engage in disruptive behaviors to escape demands from the teacher.

Furthermore, the same behavior could serve different functions in different children. As an example, suppose two children engage in the same self-injurious behavior (e.g., head banging) and blocking the head banging (restraint) is recommended and implemented. Head banging decreases for one student but increases for the other. The difference in results can be explained by the different functions of the behavior for each child. For the first child, head banging served as sensory stimulation. When an adult blocked the behavior, and eliminated the sensory stimulation, the behavior decreased. For the second child, the head banging served the function of obtaining attention from the adult. When blocking the behavior, the adult may have talked to the child or provided an alternative activity. For this child, head banging increased because it resulted in something desirable. Providing attention to the behavior actually reinforced his head banging.

Determining the function of an aberrant behavior has obvious implications for intervention and treatment. By implementing an intervention without knowing the function of an aberrant behavior, one will, at a minimum, waste time with ineffective interventions. In the worst case scenario, the aberrant behaviors will be strengthened through inadvertent reinforcement. The Iwata et al. (1982) article sparked an extensive



amount of research on conducting functional analysis in clinical or research settings. Only recently, however, has that research on functional analysis been extended to more naturalistic settings (e.g., schools). The extension of functional analysis procedures into more naturalistic settings incorporates a broad range of strategies that are referred to as functional assessment.

Within school settings, many teachers have expressed frustration over ineffective interventions and their inability to alleviate certain behavior problems in the classroom. Despite the fact that teacher-training programs include coursework in behavior management, classroom discipline continues to be one of the top concerns of teachers (Frisby, 1990; Veenman, 1984). One study revealed that out of ten possible problem areas, classroom management ranked second among new teachers and fourth among mentor teachers (Stallion & Zimpher, 1991). In many training programs, teachers are briefly presented with a wide variety of classroom management techniques in an effort to provide breadth to their training. As a result of this limited training, teachers enter the work force insufficiently prepared to implement any one method of discipline (Beare, 1991). Teachers have been trained to implement functional analysis procedures (Northup et al., 1994). The treatments based on these procedures were found to be effective. Thus it would appear that teachers would be one group that would benefit from training in functional analysis.

While best practices would dictate a functional assessment approach to intervening in problem behaviors, a further impetus for conducting functional behavioral assessments comes from a recent federal law. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was reauthorized on June 4, 1997. The law specifically requires a functional behavioral assessment before a special education student is suspended or expelled for ten

days. Thus, it is clear that special education teachers must be aware of functional assessment procedures. The researcher will examine the literature regarding the functional assessment of aberrant behaviors. Recent extensions of the functional analysis methodology into more naturalistic settings will also be described. Finally, the literature regarding teacher training in behavior management will be examined. A survey was developed to assess teachers' knowledge of functional assessment methods. The survey also examined teachers' perceptions of training in behavior management and in perceived level of competency with handling classroom behavior problems.

## Literature Review

### The Development of Functional Assessment

Functional assessment attempts to identify those environmental events that are linked to the problematic behavior. Specifically, O'Neill et al. (1997) defines functional assessment as “a process of understanding the physiological and environmental factors that contribute to a person’s problem behaviors” (p. 2). These methods, founded in the field of applied behavior analysis, seek to identify the events contributing to the problem behavior which in turn leads to effective intervention strategies.

Early functional analysis. Applied behavior analysis procedures have always sought to explain behaviors through understanding antecedents and consequences surrounding behaviors. The term “functional analysis” was applied over 30 years ago to describe methods used to ascertain environmental variables thought to control behaviors (Ferster, 1965). The purpose of the functional analysis was to “serve as a basis for making decisions about specific therapeutic interventions” (Kanfer & Saslow, 1969, p. 430). This early approach, however, was limited in scope and typically only suggested whether an operant or classical conditioning intervention strategy would be more appropriate (Kanfer & Phillips, 1970).

Modern functional analysis procedures were first developed to help discover why treatments for self-injurious behavior were limited in their effectiveness. Early research on self-injurious behavior focused on discovering ways to eliminate the behavior.

Operant conditioning methods, such as differential reinforcement procedures, timeout, extinction, and overcorrection, produced mixed findings. Certain people benefited from these approaches, others did not. The only consistently successful intervention was the use of aversives (Iwata et al., 1982). Aversives, such as electric shock and aromatic ammonia, were used to negate the reinforcing properties of the behavior. In order to be effective, the punishment was increased in intensity until it became aversive enough to overcome whatever was maintaining the behavior.

The aversives controversy. Although aversives were found to successfully decrease self-injurious behaviors, the use of aversives was not without controversy. Parents, professionals, and organized groups (e.g., The Association for the Severely Handicapped, The Association for Behavior Analysis) polarized themselves by either viewing the use of aversives as "bad" or as necessary for effective treatment (Durand, 1987). A number of psychologists and educators believed that a treatment that intentionally caused discomfort or pain was unacceptable no matter how effective it was, whereas others believed that this type of treatment was permissible if the long-term effects of the treatment resulted in less pain for the individual than potentially less effective non-aversive procedures (Jacob-Timm, 1996).

A focus simply on the pros and cons of aversives would be unproductive. There are, however, additional ethical, administrative, and empirical reasons for avoiding or limiting the use of aversives. Ethical concerns are always present when applying aversives to other people to change their behavior. Therapy involving the use of aversives with the developmentally disabled population is more controversial because they are often unable to give informed consent (Jacob-Timm, 1996). Many social service or educational agencies' administrative policies prohibit, or at least limit, the use

of aversives. Finally, empirical support of non-aversive procedures can be found for changing inappropriate behaviors (Donnellan, LaVigna, Negri-Shoultz, & Fassbender, 1988; LaVigna & Donnellan, 1986; LaVigna, Willis, & Donnellan, 1989).

A new approach. Because the use of aversives was not always an acceptable treatment method, efforts were made to discover why alternate treatments for self-injurious behaviors were so limited in their effectiveness. Iwata et al. (1982) noted that it would be especially helpful if the success of the intervention could be determined prior to implementation to avoid trial and error testing of an endless series of interventions. The researchers stated that treatment failures might be due to environmental variables that maintain the behavior. In other words, an intervention may have little effect on an aberrant behavior if that behavior is being maintained by other environmental influences. The aberrant behaviors, then, serve a "function" by eliciting desired environmental events, thus suggesting that no single method of treatment could be used all the time successfully because the behaviors could serve various functions.

In order to determine what function a self-injurious behavior served, Iwata et al. (1982) pioneered the use of analogue functional analysis as an assessment strategy. The researchers used fifteen-minute analogue sessions, twice daily, across four functional conditions: attention-seeking, escape from demands, access to tangible items, and sensory stimulation. In each analogue session one of the four functions were simulated under tightly controlled experimental conditions. As examples, in the escape condition, requests would be withdrawn whenever the child engaged in the inappropriate behavior. In the attention condition, verbal attention was given to the child only if he or she

engaged in the target behavior. Data was collected on the rates of inappropriate behavior in each condition. The condition with the highest rates of behavior was presumed to represent the function of the aberrant behavior.

The development of the analogue functional analysis procedure by Iwata et al. (1982) provided a new direction in behavioral assessment research and continues to influence its development today. Studies show that analogue functional analysis revealed the functions of problem behaviors for 70% of the individuals assessed (Vollmer & Northup, 1996). Functional analysis has been extended beyond self-injurious behavior to aggression (Mace, Page, Ivancic, & O'Brien, 1986; Wacker et al., 1990), pica (Mace & Knight, 1986), tantrums (Carr & Newsom, 1985), disordered speech (Mace & Lalli, 1991; Mace & West, 1986), and stereotypy (Durand & Carr, 1987).

#### Difficulties With Analogue Functional Analyses

While analogue functional analyses were demonstrated to be effective for many individuals and for many behavior problems, the methods are not beyond criticism. Conducting analogue functional analyses requires several highly trained people, is very time-consuming, and requires tight experimental control. The average length of time necessary for the Iwata et al. (1982) functional analyses was eight days and thirty sessions. Vollmer and Northup (1996) reported that many functional analyses require several dozen 10-15 minute sessions, which would limit their applicability no matter how effective they may be. The complicated and time-consuming nature of analogue functional analysis is especially difficult in the school setting. Students cannot be removed from instructional activities for the amount of time necessary for the strict analogue procedures (Lalli, Browder, Mace, & Brown, 1993).

Analogue techniques have also been criticized because of their lack of generalizability to the naturalistic setting. Because of the stringent control required to conduct the analogue sessions, all of the variables that maintain the behavior in the natural environment may not be revealed. Therefore, interventions based on the functional analysis may be effective only to the degree that the variables in the experimental setting match those in the natural environment (Horner & Carr, 1997; Sasso et al., 1992). Carr (1994) stated that individuals conducting analogue functional analysis must be aware of the influence of context. One must be aware of interceding variables in the naturalistic setting.

One must also be aware of the influence of context within the experimental setting. Subject reactivity to the highly controlled and unfamiliar experimental settings is a potential limitation of analogue functional analysis. Subjects may be apprehensive and react differently in a strange setting. This change in the natural environment is especially problematic for those individuals possessing average or above average intelligence and adequate social skills (Lewis & Sugai, 1996).

#### Alternate Methods of Functional Analysis

Because of the many concerns, alternate methods of functional analysis have been developed. They differ from the analogue procedures in the level of control exerted over the environment and in the length of the assessment. These methods have simply been referred to as "functional assessment." Functional assessment is a broad term that encompasses a range of strategies for determining antecedents and consequences of problem behaviors (Horner, 1994). Analogue functional analysis would be considered one method of functional assessment.

Alternate methods of functional assessment include a brief form of functional analysis and a broad range of descriptive methods. Most methods of functional assessment for the classroom have utilized descriptive information from the teacher to form a hypothesis about the function of the child's behavior. Initial uses of descriptive functional assessment in the school setting have shown promise as an alternative method to analogue procedures (Northup et al., 1994).

Brief functional analysis. One variation of analogue functional analysis has been to make the complex procedures less time-consuming and easier to implement. In one study, Northup et al. (1991) conducted a brief functional analysis of severely handicapped aggressive individuals in an outpatient setting. The assessment began with a 10-minute presentation of each of the four analogue conditions: attention, escape, tangible reinforcement, and sensory stimulation. After the initial sessions, a contingency reversal was conducted to confirm the results of the brief analogue assessment. The contingency reversal used the condition that produced the highest rates of aggressive behavior. For example, if the highest rates of aggression had occurred during the escape condition, the task was removed only upon presentation of an appropriate method of "escaping" (e.g., using a "please" sign), while all aggressive behaviors were ignored. This procedure was alternated with a brief (5-minute) replication of the analogue assessment. The entire procedure lasted only 90 minutes. These results indicated that it was feasible to conduct a brief functional analysis in both a setting and time frame that was typical of a clinical evaluation.

Descriptive assessments. Functional assessments have also been conducted using a variety of descriptive measures (e.g., observations, questionnaires, rating scales). A functional assessment is an endeavor to understand the context surrounding a problem



behavior, and descriptive measures allow the user to form hypotheses about the maintaining variables in the environment without experimental manipulation of those variables (O'Neill et al., 1997). Interviews are one way to reveal variables that may be associated with increases and decreases in problem behaviors. According to O'Neill et al. (1997), the person conducting the assessment should first interview persons who have information regarding the individual and the behaviors. This step helps to narrow the focus of the functional assessment in order to make the process more time efficient. The informant may be able to provide information about when the behavior occurs, antecedents and consequences of the behavior, the frequency, intensity, and duration of the behavior, and what interventions have been tried previously. This wealth of information helps the person conducting the assessment to determine when the child should be observed and possible functions of the behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 1995).

Behavioral rating scales and questionnaires, such as the Motivation Assessment Scale (Durand, 1990), have also been used to obtain functional assessment information. This type of approach is a more structured informant method than the interview, posing specific questions about the physical environment, nature of the activity, and social setting (Alberto & Troutman, 1995). Such rating scales, however, have been criticized for their lack of congruency with the results of analogue functional analyses (Iwata, Vollmer, & Zarcone, 1990).

In addition to information gathered through interviews and rating scales, observations of students have been conducted in their natural setting. When the target behavior occurs, the observer logs both the antecedents and consequences for each instance of problematic behavior. The child is observed until a clear pattern of behavior

emerges. The person conducting the functional assessment formulates a hypothesis of the behavior's function based on information gathered from interviews, questionnaires, and observations (O'Neill et al., 1997).

Repp and Karsh (1994) conducted descriptive assessments of two developmentally disabled students in self-contained classrooms. The students exhibited severe and frequent tantrums, causing them to be considered for more restrictive placements. The descriptive assessment consisted of teacher interviews and narrative recordings completed by an observer. All of the data were collected in the classroom under normal teaching conditions. From this data, the researchers developed a hypothesis about the function of the behavior. It was hypothesized that the students were engaging in tantrum behaviors in an effort to obtain the teacher's attention. Treatment programs based on this hypothesis were developed and were effective in reducing the target behaviors.

Repp and Karsh (1994) demonstrated that experimental analogue situations were not always necessary to design effective interventions. Not only are descriptive assessment methods more feasible in naturalistic settings but such methods also eliminate the possibility of a behavior serving one function in the analogue session and another in the classroom setting. Repp and Karsh also suggest that interventions based on data collected in the natural setting with all variables present may be more effective and maintained over a longer period of time.

Combining brief analogue and descriptive methods. The drawback of using only descriptive measures is that data are merely correlational; only analogue conditions can show functional relationships. To address this problem, a number of studies have combined procedures. In one study, Sasso et al. (1992) conducted descriptive and

experimental analyses of problem behaviors with autistic children. Two separate experimental analyses were conducted. The first experimental analysis was conducted by one of the researchers in an empty room at the school. The second analysis was conducted by a participating teacher, in the classroom, using the child's daily tasks and activities. A descriptive analysis was completed by the classroom teacher prior to conducting the experimental analysis. Therefore, the effectiveness of three different methods of assessments could be evaluated. The three methods revealed very comparable findings, suggesting the effectiveness of functional assessments in the classroom as well as the ability of teachers to implement the procedures. The study also found that the interventions derived from the functional assessment were effective in reducing the target behaviors.

Lalli et al. (1993) found similar results regarding the effectiveness of descriptive analysis. The researchers conducted descriptive and experimental analyses on three children with severe and profound mental retardation (two children with cerebral palsy and one Down syndrome child). All three subjects were non-ambulatory, nonverbal, and had few peer interactions. The target behaviors were identified as self-injury and aggression. Both methods were found to be effective in designing interventions to reduce problem behaviors. The descriptive analysis enabled the researchers to develop hypotheses about the variables maintaining the behavior. Once the variables were identified, the teachers were able to develop interventions to negate the reinforcing properties of the target behavior and build appropriate behaviors.

Northup et al. (1994) also demonstrated the treatment utility of combining brief functional analysis with descriptive functional assessment. A variation of brief functional analysis was conducted on severely handicapped individuals in a self-

contained classroom. The researchers trained the teachers to implement the brief functional analysis. Pre-assessment data were collected on the five individuals to be assessed. This data consisted of a review of the child's records, teacher interviews, and classroom observations of the subjects. From this data, the teachers developed hypotheses about the functions of the problem behavior and outlined the specific procedures and materials to be used in the analogue assessments. A brief functional analysis was then conducted in the subject's classroom to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. Each analogue session lasted 10 minutes. The sessions were continued until a clear pattern of responding occurred. The treatments based on the brief functional analysis and descriptive assessment were found to be effective, even at a 17-month follow-up interval.

Northup et al. (1994) extended the use of functional analysis to the school setting; however, it was still restricted to the severely handicapped population. Broussard and Northup (1995) hypothesized that functional analysis could be useful in regular education settings with children who were at risk for a more restrictive classroom placement. The researchers implemented a descriptive assessment procedure similar to the one used in Northup et al. (1994). From this data, hypotheses about the function of the behavior were determined and tested using a brief functional analysis. The results of this study indicate that a functional analysis can be conducted in a regular education classroom with children of average intellect. This procedure was also rated as acceptable to the participating teachers.

In the previous studies, the brief functional analysis was used merely as a confirming procedure for the descriptive assessment. In both studies, the brief analysis confirmed what had been outlined by the descriptive measures. However, training is needed in the descriptive methods of functional assessment in order for them to be effectively implemented in the schools.

### Teacher Training

One group that would benefit from functional assessment training would be teachers. Both new and experienced teachers have cited classroom management as a top-ranking problem (Frisby, 1990; Veenman, 1984). One possible reason for this problem is insufficient training in any one theoretical approach to behavior management (Watson, 1994). Beare (1991) stated that one of the goals of teaching behaviorally disordered children is to control and modify their behavior so that they are able to learn at a steady rate. However, he reported that this goal is often unfulfilled due to inadequate teacher training. Watson (1994) reported that changes are needed in teacher education in order to adequately meet the needs of behaviorally disordered children.

In Kentucky, there are no state guidelines for training teachers in behavior management. However, classroom management is included as a performance criterion in The New Teacher Standards for Preparation and Certification (Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, 1994). One of the performance criteria for New Teacher Standard II (Creates/Maintains Learning Climates) states, "Uses classroom management techniques that foster self-control and self-discipline. Encourages responsibility to self and to others." Therefore, in order to be a certified teacher in Kentucky, a teacher must utilize effective classroom management techniques.

Western Kentucky University provides a three-hour classroom and behavior management course in the four weeks prior to the start of student teaching. This course is the only one required in the area of behavior management at this university. Other universities in Kentucky require a three-hour credit course in classroom management or incorporate management strategies into several courses in the curriculum. Even if behavior management strategies were incorporated throughout the curriculum, it would be difficult to ensure that individual professors give this important topic equal time and weight in the class. Individual philosophies may also influence the outcome of this type of teacher training. Therefore, it would seem that giving teachers applied behavior management skills that have empirical support would be very beneficial. By training teachers in functional assessment, they would be able to determine the function of problem behaviors in the classroom. Therefore, they would not have to resort to the time-consuming trial and error method of determining interventions.

It has been suggested that training teachers would make assessment procedures more efficient and cost-effective, because teachers would be less in need of consultation services (Lalli et al., 1993). Apparently, little has been done with regard to training teachers in functional assessment. Only one study was found related to this issue. Sasso et al. (1992) found that two teachers trained in functional assessment rated the procedure as highly acceptable and indicated that they would continue its use in their classrooms. Both teachers were in a self-contained classroom for children with autism. Horner (1994) stated that a future direction for functional assessment would be to help school personnel in using functional assessment information to develop effective interventions.

He further stated that this type of application would mean learning more about how the knowledge of functional assessment information would affect the behavior of the user (e.g., teachers).

#### Purpose of Present Study

The investigator proposes to examine what specific behavioral strategies teachers have been trained in and what techniques they are currently using. In this study, the researcher will also examine what teachers perceive to be the most difficult classroom behaviors to deal with and their personal level of proficiency in resolving these problems. Because functional assessment is a fairly new term and the research has been primarily geared toward the developmentally disabled population, the last three questions, listed below, will be analyzed in terms of the differences between special education and regular education teachers.

The purpose of the present research is to obtain information related to the following questions:

1. What discipline methods have teachers been trained in and how helpful has this training been in alleviating behavior problems in the classroom?
2. What are teachers' perceptions regarding their personal skills in dealing with specific behavior problems in the classroom?
3. Have teachers received training in functional assessment?
4. Do teachers consider the function of aberrant behaviors when deciding upon treatment interventions?

## Method

### Subjects

Three hundred and fifty regular education and special education teachers, ranging from preschool through high school, were surveyed in order to obtain a picture of behavior management training issues in Kentucky classrooms. The teachers were from four south-central Kentucky counties and two western Kentucky counties. The schools in which the subjects taught were not randomly selected but were chosen based on the researcher's professional affiliations with a contact person at each location.

A return rate was calculated by contrasting the number of surveys sent out with the number of surveys returned within two weeks of the date printed on the cover letter. Of the 350 surveys distributed, 209 were returned, resulting in a 59.7% return rate. The participants included 49 males and 160 females. Years of teaching experience ranged from 1 to 32 years with a mean of 13.5 and a standard deviation of 8.5. There were 177 regular education teachers and 32 special education teachers. Due to the limited number of special education teachers involved in the study, grade levels were combined for data analysis purposes. Of the regular education teachers, 73 were preschool and elementary teachers, 43 were middle school teachers, and 61 were high school teachers.

### Instrument

A survey was developed for this study to gain information regarding functional assessment and behavior management practices of teachers (see Appendix A). Ease of completion and convenience were considered when developing the present survey.



Questions were developed on a broad range of issues, ranging from demographic information to self-ratings of skills. Subjects were often asked to either check one of the provided choices or write in a number, although a few open-ended questions were included to assess their responses to brief scenarios describing problematic behaviors.

As part of the three open-ended questions, teachers were given scenarios of students exhibiting problematic behaviors and asked to describe the best method to deal with the behavior. Each of the three scenarios implied a different behavioral function. For example, in the first scenario a fourth grade student declared that he “hates math,” threw his papers on the floor, and tore pages out of his math book every time the teacher began math instruction. As a consequence, the teacher sent him to the principal’s office but the behavior had increased over the last two weeks. This situation was an example of an “escape” or negative reinforcement condition in which the child likely engaged in disruptive behaviors to escape or avoid math instruction. There were similar scenarios for a child seeking peer attention and teacher attention. These three behavioral functions were chosen due to Northup and Broussard’s (1995) assertion that escape, peer attention, and teacher attention were the most prominent behavioral functions of students’ problematic behaviors in schools.

### Procedures

Administrators at 15 school buildings agreed to participate in this study. School buildings were selected to provide ratings from teachers at a range of grade levels. The survey was distributed to all subjects within their respective schools. At each school, there was a contact person who distributed and collected the forms. This method of disbursement was chosen due to its cost effectiveness, convenience, and to maximize the survey return rate. A cover letter (see Appendix B) asking for the teacher’s cooperation

and an addressed return envelope to ensure anonymity was attached to the individual surveys. The teachers returned the completed survey to the contact person by placing forms in a collection box provided at each school. The contact person returned all completed surveys to the researcher for data analysis.

To analyze the scenarios that required open-ended responses, criteria were established for rating each answer as either “Correct,” “Incorrect,” or “Vague.” An answer was considered correct if the respondent gave any indication that the function of the behavior was understood. For the escape scenario, acceptable responses included those indicating that the child’s math assignments may be too difficult, his math skills needed to be assessed, or that the child wanted to avoid math work. An answer was rated as incorrect if the response did not address the function of the behavior or the intervention dealt with a different behavioral function. For example, a response that indicated time-out was an appropriate intervention for the escape scenario was rated as incorrect because time-out would actually reinforce the escape-oriented behavior. A response was rated as a vague answer if it would not fit into one of the first two categories. Efforts were made to classify the responses as either correct or incorrect, and the vague category was used as a last resort.

Because of the potential subjectivity involved in rating answers as either correct, incorrect, or vague, interrater reliability was calculated for 43 (20.5%) randomly selected subjects. Two persons familiar with functional assessment independently rated each answer as correct, incorrect, or vague. An “agreement” occurred only if both raters placed the answer in the same category. Interrater reliability was computed by dividing the number of agreements by the number of answers (43) rated by both observers. There was an 88% agreement in the escape condition, a 93% agreement in the peer attention

condition, and an 86% agreement in the teacher attention condition. Although the agreement rates were considered acceptable, further refining of the scoring criteria was conducted and disagreements were discussed and resolved.

## Results

The focus of the present study was to examine teacher training, knowledge, and skills in behavior management strategies. Results of this study will be presented in a manner addressing the research questions. One part of the survey, not related to a research question, asked teachers to identify the number of children in their classrooms and the number of children that exhibit specific problem behaviors to the extent that an intervention is necessary to resolve the problem. An estimate was requested for the following problem behaviors: destructive, aggressive, noncompliant, and disruptive/off-task. Table 1 presents the percentage of students in the classroom that exhibit these four specific problem behaviors. Teachers reported that one out of every five children in their classroom exhibit disruptive/off-task behaviors at a problematic level. An average of 8.5% of students are noncompliant. Aggressive and destructive behaviors were less frequently noted in the classroom, although these still occurred at alarming rates. The results were also calculated separately for special education and regular education teachers (see Table 1). The levels of problem behaviors reported by special education teachers were approximately twice that of regular education teachers.

Teachers were also asked to state what behavior problem has been the most frustrating to deal with in the classroom. In response to this question, 34% of teachers surveyed listed disruptive/off-task behaviors, while 29% listed noncompliant behaviors. Other behavior problems frequently cited included aggressive behaviors (11%), apathy and laziness (7%), and destructive behaviors (6%).

Table 1

Percent of Students Exhibiting Specific Problem Behaviors

<u>Problem Behavior</u>	<u>Special Education</u>	<u>Regular Education</u>	<u>Combined</u>
Destructive	6.9	2.8	2.9
Non-Compliant	20.5	8.3	8.5
Aggressive	12.9	4.9	5.1
Disruptive/Off-Task	38.6	20.0	20.4

Research Question 1: What discipline methods have teachers been trained in and how helpful has this training been in alleviating behavior problems in the classroom?

This research question was examined in three ways: the type of training teachers have received, the specific methods in which they have received the training, and the methods typically used in their classroom. Ratings on the helpfulness of training were also obtained. One aspect of the present research examined the type of training teachers have received in behavior management techniques. Subjects were asked to indicate the kinds of training they received in dealing with classroom behavior problems. Of the total sample of teachers, 75.1% indicated that they received training in behavior management through a workshop/in-service, 69.9% received training through a college/university class, 29.7% utilized peer training/modeling, and 11.5% gained training through consultation services. (Participants were allowed to check more than one method of training.) “Other” methods of training were cited by 5.7% of subjects,

such as experience in the classroom, foster parenting classes, personal research in assertive discipline, and reading books on discipline. An additional 5.7% of the sample reported they have not had any training in behavior management.

Teachers were also asked to identify what specific discipline methods they have been trained in and to rate the helpfulness of this training. Five common discipline methods were listed as choices; an open-ended “other” category was also included.

Table 2

Teachers’ Training, Ratings of Helpfulness, and Typical Usage of Discipline Methods

<u>Discipline Method</u>	<u>Training %</u>	<u>Helpfulness<sup>a</sup> Mean (SD)</u>	<u>Typically Used %</u>
Time-Out	77.0	3.22 (.95)	39.2
Praise/Rewards	89.9	3.70 (.94)	83.7
Loss of Privileges	79.4	3.63 (.87)	72.7
Verbal Reprimand	72.0	3.36 (.85)	82.3
Assertive Discipline	72.8	3.64 (.94)	45.9
Redirection	--b	--b	56.5
Other	5.7	4.38 (.91)	12.0

Note. Percentages add to more than 100 because teachers could choose more than one method.

<sup>a</sup>The Helpfulness rating was based on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being “not at all” and 5 being “very helpful.” <sup>b</sup>Redirection was not listed as an option on the training question.

Table 2 reports the percentages for those discipline methods. Most teachers indicated they received training in implementing praise/rewards systems. In fact, a large majority of the teachers indicated they received training in all methods listed. “Other” methods of training that were reported included restraint training, ignoring, token economies, and redirection.

For each of the discipline methods in which they received training, respondents also rated the helpfulness of the training they received. A 5-point Likert scale was used with higher numbers indicating a higher level of helpfulness. The mean helpfulness rating for each of the above mentioned discipline methods fell within the moderately helpful category, ranging from a mean of 3.22 for time-out training to 3.7 for training in praise and rewards (See Table 2).

Another portion of the survey asked teachers to identify all of the discipline methods they typically use in the classroom. Six common discipline methods and an open-ended “other” category were listed. Table 2 reports the percentages of teachers who use each of the discipline methods. Consistent with training, the largest percentage of teachers utilize praise/rewards systems. Verbal reprimand and loss of privileges were also widely used by the teachers. Other methods listed on the survey and by the teachers were used relatively less often. “Other” methods listed by teachers included all of the following: detention and in-school suspension, behavior contracts, parent conferences, written assignments, send child to the office, ignore the behavior, talking with the student, natural consequences, offering choices, and physical restraint.

Research Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions regarding their personal skills in dealing with specific behavior problems in the classroom?

This focus of the study was to determine teachers' perceived level of proficiency in resolving behavior problems in the classroom. Respondents were asked to rate their skills in dealing with destructive, aggressive, noncompliant, and disruptive/off-task behaviors on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "poor" and 5 being "excellent." Table 3 contains a list of mean ratings for each of the four behavior problems. The ratings indicate that the teachers, as a whole, believe that their behavior management skills are fairly adequate when dealing with destructive, aggressive, noncompliant, and disruptive/off-task behaviors.

The results of the teachers' ratings were also analyzed in terms of the differences between regular education and special education teachers by conducting t-tests on each of the four skill areas. There were no significant differences between the skill ratings of Table 3

Teachers' Mean Ratings of Their Skills in Resolving Behavior Problems

<u>Behavior Problem</u>	<u>Special Education</u>	<u>Regular Education</u>	<u>Combined</u>
Destructive	3.68	3.57	3.59
Aggressive	3.77	3.67	3.68
Non-compliant	3.97	3.78	3.81
Disruptive/Off-task	4.03	4.02	4.02

Note. There were no significant differences between regular education and special education teachers.



regular education and special education teachers. To determine if the self-ratings of behavior management skills were related to years of teaching experience for the overall group of teachers, statistical correlations were conducted for each behavior problem. No significant correlations between teaching experience and self-ratings of skills were found for any of the behavioral problems.

Research Question 3: Have teachers received training in functional assessment?

The present research examined the pervasiveness of teacher training in functional assessment. Table 4 includes the percentages of regular education and special education teachers who have knowledge of functional assessment. Initially, respondents were asked if they simply heard of the term functional assessment. Most of the special education teachers, but few regular education teachers, had heard of the term functional assessment. Small percentages of both groups had participated in a functional assessment, although special education teachers were more likely to have done so.

Table 4

Percent of Teachers Who Have Knowledge of Functional Assessment

	<u>Special Education</u>	<u>Regular Education</u>	<u>Combined</u>
Heard of Term	75.0	16.9	26.0
Participated	28.1	3.3	7.3
Specific Training	42.3*	11.5	13.6

Note. Significance testing was only applied to the “Specific Training” variable.

\* $p < .001$

To directly answer the research question, teachers were asked if they had received specific training in functional assessment and were also asked to rate the helpfulness of this training. Relatively few teachers have received training in functional assessment, although a Chi-square test found significantly more special education teachers have received training than regular education teachers ( $\chi^2 = 15.18$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Those that had been trained in functional assessment rated the training as only somewhat helpful ( $M = 3.0$ ).

Research Question 4: Do teachers consider the function of aberrant behaviors when deciding upon treatment interventions?

A major focus of this study was to determine if teachers consider the function of a problem behavior when deciding upon treatment interventions. Table 5 reports the percentages of correct and incorrect responses for special education teachers, regular education teachers, and the total sample. Differences between special education and regular education teachers were analyzed by conducting a Chi-square test.

When presented with the “escape” scenario, less than a third of all of the teachers indicated an understanding of the function of the behavior. An example of a correct answer was, “Don’t send him to the office, because he wants out of math class. . . Give him math work at a level he can successfully complete.” The majority of subjects listed an intervention that either did not consider the function of the behavior, such as loss of privileges, or listed a strategy that actually reinforced the behavior, such as time-out. As an example, one subject suggested, “Remove the student from class (time-out, alternative education room). The student cannot rejoin the group until his behavior improves. . . .” Another teacher stated that the best method to deal with the behavior

Table 5

Percentage of Teachers Correctly and Incorrectly Addressing the Behavioral Function

<u>Behavioral Function</u>	<u>Special Education</u>		<u>Regular Education</u>		<u>Combined</u>	
	<u>Correct</u>	<u>Incorrect</u>	<u>Correct</u>	<u>Incorrect</u>	<u>Correct</u>	<u>Incorrect</u>
Escape	43.3	53.3	29.2	67.3	31.3	65.2
Peer Attention	27.6*	48.3	12.9	70.2	15.0	67.0
Teacher Attention	65.5	31.0	47.0	50.6	49.7	47.7

\* $p < .05$ 

was to “Give Joe some extra attention before math class begins. Stand close to him and encourage him to do as he is asked without disruption.” This statement was also considered incorrect because it implies that the student was engaging in the behavior to obtain the teacher’s attention, not escape the math work. The remaining 3.5% of the sample responded with a vague answer that could not be categorized as correct or incorrect. An example of a vague response was, “I would call his parents and set up a meeting to see why he hates math.” Although this answer implied partial knowledge, it was too imprecise to receive credit, based on the established scoring criteria. The results revealed no significant difference between special education and regular education teachers in considering the function of the behavior in the “escape” scenario ( $\chi^2 = 2.38$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

The second scenario detailed a situation in which a child was seeking peer attention. On this question, very few teachers gave a response that demonstrated understanding of the behavior's function (see Table 5). One subject appropriately responded, "If Zack needs peer approval and attention, redirect his need to a leadership role with his peers." The majority of subjects did not indicate that the behavior was intended to gain peer attention. Many of the incorrect responses discussed the issue of Zack's derogatory comments to others. One teacher wrote, "Tell him he shouldn't put down others that can't read as well as he does. Remind him of the class rule: Treat others like you want to be treated." Vague answers comprised the remaining 18% of teacher responses. Many of the vague answers indicated the use of time-out, without any further explanation. Using the Chi-square test, the results revealed significantly more special education teachers recognized that the student engaged in the behavior in order to obtain peer attention than regular education teachers ( $\chi^2 = 6.07$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

The final scenario presented a situation in which a student was seeking to obtain teacher attention by constantly requesting assistance, even though she has demonstrated competency in the area of math. Overall, half of the teachers were able to correctly identify the student as seeking teacher attention. Appropriate responses included statements like "Jill is seeking attention." A response was also scored as correct if it mentioned limiting teacher attention such as "Praise/reward for work done independently." Given the underlying function of the behavior, about half of the teachers provided an incorrect response, such as "verbal reprimand" or "loss of privileges." The remaining 2.5% of the sample provided such functionally vague answers as "I would call on Jill more in class and praise her for her correct answers or efforts." This answer was considered vague because even though she used praise for

correct answers, she failed to mention independent work or limiting teacher attention.

Using the Chi-square test, no significant difference between the two groups of teachers was found ( $\chi^2 = 3.79$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

As previously noted, many more teachers were able to recognize the teacher attention function than the escape or peer attention function (see Table 5). To determine if this difference was statistically significant, a z-test was conducted. The results found that the difference in the number of appropriate responses to the teacher attention scenario was significantly higher than in the escape ( $z = 5.28$ ;  $p < .01$ ) or peer attention scenarios ( $z = 9.72$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

## Discussion

Many teachers have expressed frustration over ineffective interventions and their inability to alleviate certain behavior problems in the classroom. Despite the fact that teacher-training programs typically include coursework in behavior management, classroom discipline continues to be one of the top concerns of teachers (Frisby, 1990; Veenman, 1984). The purpose of this study was to examine what behavioral strategies teachers have been trained in and what techniques they are currently using. The researcher also examined teachers' perceptions of their skills in alleviating behavior problems and what they perceive to be the most frustrating behavior problem to deal with. A final purpose of the present research was to determine if teachers consider the function of problem behaviors when deciding upon treatment interventions. A survey was developed to gain information regarding functional assessment and behavior management practices of teachers. The results of the study are based upon a sample of Kentucky classrooms.

### The Extensiveness of Problematic Behavior

Regular education teachers reported that an average of 1 in 5 of their students exhibit disruptive/off-task behaviors to the point that an intervention is necessary to resolve the problem. Although the percentages for noncompliant, aggressive, and destructive behaviors were lower, these behaviors still occur at an alarming rate. The rates of problem behaviors reported by special education teachers were double that of

regular education teachers. The relatively high rates of problematic behaviors in special education settings are not surprising. Gresham (1995) cites several studies that have reported higher rates of behavioral problems among students with learning disabilities, mental retardation, and behavior disorders. Disruptive/off-task behaviors were also noted by the teachers to be the most frustrating behavior problem. One possible reason that disruptive/off-task behaviors are perceived as being more frustrating than destructive or aggressive behaviors may be due to the frequency at which this behavior occurs. Disruptive/off-task behaviors are seen much more frequently in the classroom than some of the more severe behavior problems.

#### Teacher Training in Behavior Management

Training in specific behavior management techniques was rated by the teachers as only moderately helpful. In addition, the techniques they were trained in sometimes varied greatly from what they used in their classrooms. For example, while 77% of the teachers received training in time-out, only 39% used the method in the classroom. It is possible that time-out is a method that is less desirable for older students and thus is used less. This finding may also imply, however, that the training conducted in specific discipline techniques may not always be relevant to the classroom setting.

The greatest majority of teachers reported they received behavior management training through a workshop/in-service. Often, this type of training is required to obtain a yearly quota of professional development days. The drawback of this type of training is that a great deal of material is presented in a short time period. There is often little opportunity to practice new skills or receive feedback upon implementation of a new system. As noted by Robinson (1990), "one of the major problems with traditional 'one-shot' in-service is the number of ideas presented during the training that are forgotten by

participants within the first hour of the drive home” (p. 577). The second highest percentage of training in behavior management was gained through a college/university class. This setting is an opportunity to provide new teachers with the necessary training to handle the significant levels of behavior problems reported to be in today’s classroom. However, there are no state guidelines for training teachers in behavior management. Consequently, training in behavior management strategies varies greatly across universities. Since this study revealed such high rates of problematic behavior and since classroom discipline is continually ranked as one of the top concerns of today’s educators, it appears that teacher training in behavior management needs to be increased or improved. A small but alarming 5.7% of this sample indicated that they had not received any training in behavior management.

#### Self-Perceptions of Skills

Teachers’ perceptions of their behavior management skills were assessed using ratings provided for four specific behavior problems. The results of the assessment revealed that teachers rate their skills in dealing with problem behaviors as fairly adequate. On average, the ratings were comparable for regular education and special education teachers and similar for different types of behavior problems. One might assume that since behavior problems are common with special education students, special education teachers would be better prepared or feel more skilled in dealing with problematic behaviors. The results of this study, however, do not support such an assumption.

The present research also examined the relationship between teaching experience and self-perceptions of behavior management skills. Research has reported that new teachers often feel insufficiently prepared to enter the work force with the limited



amount of training they have received in classroom management (Watson, 1994).

Therefore, one might expect to see a significant difference between the ratings of new teachers and experienced teachers. The results of this study, however, revealed that teaching experience was not related to teachers' perceived level of skills in dealing with problem behaviors.

### Functional Assessment

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized on June 4, 1997. The federal law specifically requires a functional behavioral assessment before a special education student is suspended or expelled for ten days. However, the results of the survey indicated that most regular education teachers and a fourth of the special education teachers have never even heard of the term functional assessment. Few teachers have received any training in functional assessment. This finding is a definite concern for schools. How can a proper functional behavioral assessment be conducted without a significant increase in teacher training?

The present research examined whether or not teachers considered the function of aberrant behaviors when deciding upon treatment interventions. Three scenarios were presented to the subjects, each of which implied a different behavioral function. Few teachers recognized the underlying function of the behaviors. The teachers were more likely to recognize when a child was engaging in a behavior to obtain teacher attention than when the child was trying to "escape" an activity or obtain peer attention. Such a finding is consistent with the popular, but sometimes erroneous, belief that students' inappropriate behaviors occur to obtain the teacher's attention. Some of the subjects indicated responses that would further reinforce the problematic behavior, making it more resistant to change. Other subjects listed such generic strategies as loss of

privileges or verbal reprimand that did not get at the root of the problem behavior. Iwata et al. (1982) noted that it would be especially helpful if the success of interventions could be determined prior to implementation to avoid trial and error testing of an endless series of interventions. By determining the function of the problem behavior, effective interventions can be implemented that will negate the reinforcing properties of the behavior.

Sasso et al. (1992) demonstrated the effectiveness of conducting functional assessments in a special education classroom as well as the ability of teachers to implement the procedures. The study also found that the interventions derived from the functional assessment were effective in reducing the target behaviors. Broussard and Northup (1995) demonstrated that functional assessments can be conducted in a regular education classroom with children of average intellect. This procedure was also rated as acceptable to the participating teachers.

Only one difference between special education and regular education teachers was found in the recognition of the functions of behaviors: special education teachers were able to recognize the peer attention function at a significantly higher rate than the regular education teachers. Because many special education students exhibit problem behaviors, it is surprising that special education teachers did not demonstrate more superiority over regular education teachers on the behavior management issues addressed by this study. Often, behavior management is seen as the application of a consequence following an inappropriate behavior. This traditional and overly simplistic view of behavior management is outdated. A more effective approach would include uncovering why the behavior is occurring, making antecedent or ecological changes to work toward prevention, and teaching more acceptable, alternative behaviors to serve the

same function as the inappropriate behavior. It is clear from the results of this study that much progress is needed to enable teachers to become more effective at managing problematic behaviors.

### Limitations of the Study

This study provides a picture of behavior management training and problem behaviors in classrooms in six Kentucky counties. Subjects for this study were not randomly sampled from across the state nor were any subjects obtained from other parts of the country. Therefore, the results may not necessarily generalize to all Kentucky teachers or to teachers in other areas of the country. The reliability of the survey instrument should also be considered in terms of whether the respondents fully understood what was being asked of them. Definitions of terms such as “noncompliance” or “disruptive” might have been helpful to the participants. When asking teachers to identify what behavior management methods they had received training in, there was no measure of the depth of this training. Therefore, the level of training may have varied significantly between subjects. Efforts were made to ensure that the questions would be interpreted accurately. The three scenarios assessing behavioral functions were developed by two persons familiar with functional assessment in an effort to avoid misunderstandings. However, the scenarios were not field-tested on persons familiar with functional assessment to make sure the functions of behavior implied in the scenarios were clear.

### Future Implications

The results of this study provide some valuable information regarding the level of teacher training and problem behaviors in Kentucky classrooms. However, further research is needed to expand on these findings. Do teachers still perceive classroom

discipline to be a top-ranking problem? This study also revealed a significant number of problem behaviors in the classroom setting. Do teachers feel that their current interventions are effective or are they searching for a more effective strategy? Furthermore, while the need for additional training is clear, it is unclear as to the best method or methods to provide such training. Future research will need to address efficient ways to help teachers learn effective behavior management skills.

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APPENDIX A

Research Survey

### Discipline Problems?

We are interested in learning about teachers' background, methods, and ideas regarding classroom discipline. This information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation-it is greatly appreciated.

1. What area/level are you currently teaching?  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary                      \_\_\_\_\_ Special Education  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School                  \_\_\_\_\_ Preschool  
       \_\_\_\_\_ High School                    \_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. How many years have you taught? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Male                      \_\_\_\_\_ Female
  
4. How many children do you have in your class(es)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. In a typical year, how many children in your class(es) would exhibit the following behaviors to the extent you consider it a problem? (i.e., an intervention is necessary to resolve the problem behavior)  
       Destructive \_\_\_\_\_                      Aggressive \_\_\_\_\_  
       Non-compliant \_\_\_\_\_                      Disruptive/off task \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How would you rate your skills in resolving each of the following behavior problems?  
       **1 = Poor; 2 = Somewhat limited; 3 = O.K.; 4 = Fairly well; 5 = Excellent**  
       Destructive----- 1            2            3            4            5  
       Aggressive----- 1            2            3            4            5  
       Non-compliant----- 1            2            3            4            5  
       Disruptive/off task---- 1            2            3            4            5
  
7. What behavior problem has been the most frustrating to deal with?  
       \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What kind of training have you had, if any, in dealing with behavior problems in the classroom? (Check all that apply.)  
       \_\_\_\_\_ College/University Class                      \_\_\_\_\_ Workshop/In-Service  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Training/Modeling                      \_\_\_\_\_ Consultation Services  
       \_\_\_\_\_ No Training  
       \_\_\_\_\_ Other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Have you ever heard of functional assessment? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes            \_\_\_\_\_ No
  
10. Have you ever participated in a functional assessment? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes            \_\_\_\_\_ No

11. What discipline method(s) were you trained in and how helpful was this training?

<u>Training?</u>		<u>If Yes, How Helpful Was It?</u>					
		Not At All	<	-----	>	Very Helpful	
Time-out	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5	
Praise/Rewards	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5	
Loss of Privileges	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5	
Verbal Reprimand	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5	
Assertive Discipline	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5	
Functional Assessment	Yes No	1	2	3	4	5	
Other (specify) _____		1	2	3	4	5	

12. What discipline methods do you typically use in your classroom? (Check all that apply.)  
*Put a star next to the method you use the most.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Time-out	<input type="checkbox"/> Praise/Rewards
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of Privileges	<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal Reprimand
<input type="checkbox"/> Assertive Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Redirection	

13. Joe is a fourth grade student in Mrs. Jones' class. Every time Mrs. Jones begins math instruction, Joe throws his papers on the floor, calls out that he "hates math," and tears pages out of his math book. Mrs. Jones subsequently sends him to the principal's office. This behavior has increased over the last two weeks. Based on this limited information, what is the best method to deal with this type of behavior?

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14. Zack is a second-year primary student in Mrs. Smith's class. During reading, Zack will often make smart-aleck remarks about the reading material and derogatory comments about some of the poor readers in class. The other children in class laugh at his remarks and think he is "cool." Mrs. Smith doesn't know how to deal with Zack's behavior. Based on this limited information, what is the best method to deal with this type of behavior?

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15. Jill is a seventh grade student in Mrs. Davis's class. Jill is an average math student, however, she constantly raises her hand for assistance from the teacher. She says that she cannot do the assignment. When Mrs. Davis watches her work problems, Jill arrives at the correct answers. When Mrs. Davis goes to help another student, Jill raises her hand and states that she cannot do the assignment unassisted. Based on this limited information, what is the best method to deal with this type of behavior?

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## APPENDIX B

### Cover Letter

Dear Teacher:

Classroom discipline has been cited as one of America's greatest obstacles in education. Many teachers have expressed frustration over ineffective behavioral interventions and their inability to alleviate certain behavior problems in the classroom. Despite the fact that teacher-training programs include coursework in behavior management, classroom discipline continues to be one of the top concerns of teachers.

As a graduate student in the School Psychology Program at Western Kentucky University, my specialist project involves surveying teachers to examine perceptions of behavior management training. I am also interested in the discipline methods that are currently being used and the teachers' perceived level of competency in dealing with behavior problems in the classroom.

I would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes to fill out the enclosed survey, which should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and anonymity is ensured. Returning the survey indicates your consent to take part in this project. There are no anticipated risks associated with your involvement in this study. To participate in this research study, please complete and return the attached survey in the enclosed envelope. When completed, please place the sealed envelope in the collection box located at your school. If you choose not to participate, please return the survey blank. Additionally, if you would like information regarding the results of the study, please list your name and address below.

**Please complete and return the survey by May 5. Thank you for your time and participation.**

Sincerely,

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School Psychology Intern  
Western Kentucky University  
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